

Environment Committee
Public Hearing Testimony
RE: An Act Concerning Outdoor Wood-Burning Furnaces
Raised S.B. No. 126

March 8, 2010

Members of the Environment committee, Thank you for this opportunity to speak before you today.

My name is Susan Rivard and I live in the town of Hebron CT. I am here to speak in strong support of a statewide ban on Outdoor Wood Burning Furnaces and suggest concerns to proposed Senate bill #126.

I came before this committee approximately 6 years ago with the support of our Senator Edith Prague and told my story concerning the ill health affects my family was experiencing due to my neighbor's outdoor wood burning furnace. My husband and I provided facts and concerns at that time which strongly warranted a moratorium on any further sales of OWBF's in the state of CT. Unfortunately, no moratorium was passed and in 2005, the existing setback and stack height regulations were adopted. These regulations clearly did not solve the problem of our citizens becoming ill from living in close proximity to an OWBF. In 2004, there were 65 complaints called into the DEP. I feared at that time that if the state did not take action and pass a moratorium this problem would only escalate and more and more families would be harmed. Unfortunately, my fear as come to truth. You now have over 700 complaints and OWBF's are being utilized in numerous towns from West to East of CT. This problem will continue to grow within our neighborhoods unless correct legislative action is taken.

I have great concern for the proposed language in Bill # 126 concerning the time a furnace owner can utilize their system. Banning the use of OWBF's for only the months of April 15th to October 15th is neither logical nor equitable. Emissions from an OWBF are no different from October through March. Furthermore, the winter months propose greater health risks due to the facts of "inversion", which is related to air temperature keeping smoke low to the ground for hours. I would ask you to please consult the DEP for more facts concerning the science of inversion as it pertains to wood smoke in the winter months. This will help you to better understand why it is important for the quality of our public health to ban these furnaces in all months of the year. If the current bill passes, as soon as October 15th arrives and the furnace owners begin use, the complaints will flood in once again

and again another bill will have passed that will not address the real problem of toxic emissions and the ill affects associated with those emissions.

The manufacturers of OWBF's have been making claims for the last six years that they have improved their product's emissions when in fact they have not. It is clear that you would not be receiving the amount of complaints if this were true. I can only hope that money is being spent on research and development to better this product and clean up the emissions and I would ask our Legislators to pass a moratorium on any further sales and operation until it can be proven that toxic emissions from the OWBF's will not harm the general public.

I would like to summarize with these final points. The OWBF is a problem on it's own and should be addressed as such. Although wood smoke is harmful in general, there is no comparison to the toxic emissions that are spewed from one of these stacks due to design flaws and amount of smoke they create. Fortunately the town of Hebron has banned the use of OWBF's and I can proudly say was the first in CT to do so. Unfortunately, the furnace next to me was "grandfathered" under the Hebron regulations that were passed. We were left with no other choice but to file a civil lawsuit at our cost in order to gain back our quality of life. We were successful but others across our State have not been. I have received numerous calls in the last six years from many other families affected by these furnaces looking for direction, looking for an answer. You may not completely understand the impact that this situation can have on your lives unless you've experienced it firsthand. I ask you to please try.

Thank you,
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